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A BRIEF

ACCOUNT

*Friends, Society of*

Of the PEOPLE called

QUAKERS,

THEIR

DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE;

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A BRIEF  
ACCOUNT

Of the PEOPLE called

QUAKERS.

QUAKERS.] A RELIGIOUS Society, that began to be distinguished by this Name in *England*, where it first took its rise, about the Middle of the last Century.

In treating of this People, we shall deviate from the Generality of those who have mentioned them in their Writings; by exhibiting the Account they give of *themselves*, without making ourselves answerable for their Principles or Practices.

WILLIAM SEWELL, a Dutchman, published in the Year 1717 the *History* of this people. He was one of their own Persuasion; a Man of Learning; and known to the Public by his

“ Dictionary of the *Dutch* and *English* “ languages.” He had Access to all their Records ; corresponded with the most eminent ; lived at the Time when the Facts he recorded were recent ; and we have not heard that any Part of his History has been controverted : And as we are informed that it has been published with the Approbation of the Quakers, we may therefore consider it as an authentic History of their Rise, Progress, and Principal Opinions.

George Fox (for whose Birth and Parentage see page 6. of Sewell’s History, &c.) was the First of these People. He was of a grave, sedate Turn from his Infancy ; always averse to the Follies of Youth, and desirous of nothing so much as to be preserved in Innocence and Simplicity.—He was early remarked as an Example in these Respects ; and of inflexible Integrity. When a Youth, he was desirous, above all things, to please God ; and cautiously avoided every thing, that either *Scripture*, or the Dictates of his own *Conscience*, taught him to believe was  
*offensive.*



*offensive*.—As he grew up this Disposition increased: It cost him much Anxiety, much Distress:——But at length he was satisfied, in respect to many *Doubts* he had admitted; and gained much *Experience* by the Things he had *suffered*.——*This* enabled him to *instruct Others*: And about the Year 1647, we find him travelling through several Counties in England, seeking out such as had any religious Tenderness, and exciting the Inquiries of several concerning him.——Many embraced his Opinions: And, indeed, he seems to have roused the Public Mind, as much as ever any Individual did in those Counties for the Time, and under such Circumstances. A Man of *low Birth*, without *Literature*, merely by the *Sanctity* of his *LIFE*, and the *Simplicity* of his *DOCTRINES*, to have collected from all Professions, and most Ranks, Men of Character, Fortune, and Understanding, and *imbodied* them as a *RELIGIOUS SOCIETY*; to have instituted one of the best concerted Plans of *Civil Discipline*; is a Circumstance

most true and not unworthy the Disquisitions of the ablest PHILOSOPHERS.

The Name of *Quaker* was affixed to this People early, by way of Reproach. — In their Assemblies it sometimes happened that some were so struck with the Remembrance of their *past Follies*, and Forgetfulness of their *Condition*; others so deeply affected with a Sense of God's *Mercies* to them; that they actually *trembled* and *quaked*. — The Nickname so suited the vulgar Taste, that it soon became general. *Friends*, or the *Friends* of TRUTH, was the Name they were commonly known by to *one another*: But the Epithet above-mentioned was stamped upon them by their Adversaries, and perhaps indelibly.

The following Abstract from the *Propositions* of our Countryman, the eminent BARCLAY, will perhaps exhibit as clear a Summary of their Opinions, as can well be comprised within the Limits allowed to this Article:

I. The

1. The Height of all *Happiness* is placed in the true Knowledge of God.
2. The *true* Knowledge of God is alone to be obtained by the Revelation of the *Spirit* of God.
3. The Revelation of the *Spirit* of God to the Saints has produced the Scriptures of *Truth*.
4. From whence it appears that Mankind in general is *fallen* and *degenerated*.
5. That God, out of his infinite Love, has offered *universal* Redemption by *Christ*, who tasted Death for *every* Man.
6. That there is an evangelical and saving *Light* and *Grace* in ALL.
7. That in as many as *resist not* this Light, but *receive* the same, in them are produced Holiness, Righteousness, Purity, and the Fruits which are acceptable to God:
8. Even so, as to arrive at a State of *Freedom* from *actual* sinning and transgressing the Law of God.
9. Yet

9. Yet with a *Possibility* of Sinning.
10. That as all true Knowledge in Things Spiritual is received by the *Spirit* of God ; so by it every true Minister of the Gospel is *ordained* and *prepared* for the Ministry : And as they have freely *received*, so are they freely to *give*.
11. That the true *Worship* of God is in *Spirit*, and in *Truth* ; not limited to *Place* or *Time*, nor subject to the *Intervention* of any *Person* ; but is to be performed under the Moving of the Holy Spirit in our *Hearts* ; yet without derogating from the Necessity and Utility of Public *United* Worship ; in which their Sufferings and Constancy have been remarkable.
12. That *Baptism* is a pure and *spiritual* Thing ; the Baptism of the *Spirit* and of *Fire*.
13. That the Communion of the *Body* and *Blood* of Christ is *inward* and *spiritual*.
14. That it is not lawful for any Human Authority to force the *Consciences*



*Consciencies* of others on Account of Difference in *Worship* or *Opinion*; except such *Opinions* tend to the *Prejudice* of one's Neighbour in his *Life* or *Estate*, or are inconsistent with *Human Society*.

15. That as the End of Religion is to redeem Man from the *Spirit* of *this World*, and to lead into inward *Communion* with God; therefore all vain Customs and Habits are to be rejected, which tend to *divert* the Mind from a Sense of the Fear of God, and that evangelical Spirit wherewith Christians ought to be leavened.

Such are the Sentiments of this People, as proposed to the Public by their *Apologist*; who has largely commented on these Topics, in a Work that has passed through no less than Eight Editions in English, and has been printed in most of the Modern Languages.

Their Particularities of Address, Language, and Behaviour; their declining the Use of Arms; their refusing to pay Tithes, or contribute to the Support

Support of Ministers (as such) in any Shape ; likewise their refusing to swear or take an Oath on any Occasion whatever ; have subjected them to much Obloquy, and many grievous Sufferings. On what *Principles*, and by what *Arguments*, they vindicate themselves from the Objections raised against them by their Adversaries, may be seen in this elaborate Performance. — Government has, however, in many Instances, extended to this People great Indulgences ; convinced, no doubt, by their patient Sufferings, that their Professions of conscientious Scruples were sincere ; and that nothing dangerous to Society could be apprehended from a People, who disclaimed the Use of *Arms* both offensive and defensive.

The *Economy* of this Society likewise deserves our Notice. It appears by their History, that soon after the Preaching of George Fox had drawn together in many Parts of England considerable Bodies of People professing the same Opinions, he found it expedient, for their better Government, to establish

establish Regular Meetings for *Discipline*. The following is, as nearly as we can collect, the Plan that is established amongst them :

Where there are any Quakers, they meet together once a *Month*, to consider of the Necessities of their *Poor*, and to provide for their *Relief*; to hear and determine *Complaints* arising from among themselves; to enquire into the Conversation of their respective Members in regard to *Morality*, and Conformity to their *religious Sentiments*; to allow the Passing of *Marriages*; and to injoin a strict Regard to the *Peace* and good Order of the Society, the proper *Education* of their young People, and a general Attention to the Principles and Practices of their Profession. — In every Country where there are *Monthly Meetings*; a Meeting of the like Kind, and for similar Purposes, is held every QUARTER. This Meeting consists of *Deputies* sent from the several *Monthly Meetings*; who are charged with Answers in Writing, to *Queries* proposed to them respecting the good Order of the

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the Society.—At these Meetings *Appeals* are received, in case of any Disputes; and *Differences* settled, if possible. *Advices* are given, as Occasions offer; and *Assistance* afforded to any of the *Monthly* Meetings, in case of a larger Proportion of the Poor, or any similar Expenses.—As there are Quakers in most Parts of England, there are few Counties which have not these *Quarterly* Meetings: And from these are deputed four, six, or eight of their Members once a Year, to attend their ANNUAL Assembly at LONDON.

The ANNUAL Assembly is commonly held in Whitsun-Week; not from any superstitious Reference, as they say, to the Effusion of the Holy Ghost at the Time of Pentecost;—but merely as it is a Season most *convenient* to the *Body*. —At this *Anniversary* Meeting, consisting of Members deputed from every *Quarterly* Meeting, and a Number of the most judicious of their Persuasion in *London* (selected for the Purpose of acting on all Emergencies for the good of the Society) Accounts are received



ceived of the STATE of the Society in every Part of the World where it exists. —The Deputies bring with them *Accounts*, signed by the respective *Quarterly* Meetings, informing the YEARLY Meeting if any *Disunion* appears; if there is any Neglect in the religious Education of their *Youth*; if the *Poor* are well provided for; if they keep to their Testimony against paying *Tithes*, and bearing *Arms*; if they pay the King his *Duties*, *Customs*, and *Excise*; and forbear to deal in Goods suspected to be *run*. — *Appeals* are there received, and *finally determined*; *Propositions* received and considered; and *Rules* formed on particular Emergencies. And lastly, such *Advices* are sent to the *subordinate* Meetings, as the particular or general State of the Society requires.

Perhaps this is the only Society in the World, that have allowed any Share in the Management of their Affairs to the *Female* Sex;—which they do upon the Principle, that “*Male and Female* are all ONE in CHRIST.” —Accordingly we find them in every  
Depart-

Department of their Institution. They have Women Preachers; for whom the celebrated *Locke* has made an excellent Apology. These have also their Meetings for *Discipline*; in which the like Care is taken in regard to the *Female* Youth, and the good Order of their Sex, as is done by the *Men* in respect to their own.—And when we reflect what a Number of Individuals of *both* Sexes are kept in good Order by the Police of this Society, how few of them are brought into Courts of Justice as *Delinquents*, how peaceable their *Behaviour*, and how exemplary their *Conduct*; we cannot but think their **PRINCIPLES** deserve a more accurate Examination than has hitherto been attempted; owing, perhaps, to the *vulgar Prejudices* circulated against them.

We shall close this Article with observing, that, according to the best of our Information, neither their *Ministers*, nor those who have the principal Care of the Society, enjoy any *pecuniary* Emoluments or Advantages.—A few *Clerks*, only, receive Salaries for keep-  
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ing their Records : So that, perhaps, there is not a Religious Society now existing, where PRINCIPLE has greater Influence in promoting the Ends of their Institution.

It is remarkable, that all the Settlements of the Europeans in America, except the Quaker Settlement in *Pennsylvania*, “ were made by Force of Arms,” with very little Regard to any prior Title in the Natives.—The Kings of Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain, together with the States of Holland (then the only Maritime Powers) gave Grants of such Parts of America as their People could *lay hold* on; studying only to avoid interfering with their European Neighbours.—But Mr. *Penn*, being a Quaker, did not think his Powers from King Charles II. a sufficient Title to the Country since called Pennsylvania. He therefore assembled the Sachems, or Princes, then in that Country, and *purchased* from them the Extent of Land that he wanted.

The Government of this country is mostly in the Hands of Quakers; who  
never

never have any Quarrels with the Natives.—When they desire to extend their Settlements, they *purchase* new Lands of the Sachems; never taking any thing from them by Force.—How unlike is this Conduct to that of the *Spaniards*! who *murdered Millions* of the Natives of Mexico, Terra Firma, Peru, Chili, &c. !—The Barbarities used to the poor *Indians* in conquering their Country, and forcing them to discover their *Gold*, are a Reproach to HUMAN NATURE!



FINIS.



